Product innovation at UNICEF is about turning ideas into tangible and scalable solutions.

It involves the identification, development and scaling of fit-for-purpose and value-for-money products that respond to the unmet needs of children.

By working with field partners and programmatic experts to understand those needs, businesses and academia to develop products that meet those needs, and programming partners and donors to bring the products to scale, product innovation at UNICEF is having a tremendous impact for children.

Product Innovation Portfolio

UNICEF is managing a portfolio of Product Innovation Projects (PIPs) that respond to the needs outlined in UNICEF’s strategic programme areas, including child survival, child protection, education, and emergencies. The current portfolio includes a variety of PIPs and is constantly changing with new projects emerging and others leaving the innovation process once they are fully scaled or closed because they had not fulfilled the desired impact.

INNOVATION PORTFOLIO

8 HEALTH
- Oxygen Plant-in-a-Box
- Resilient Oxygen Concentrator
- Multi-modal ARIDA
- CPAP for Low-resource Settings
- Non-pneumatic Anti-shock Garment (NASG)
- Uterine Balloon Tamponade
- Vaccine Microarray Patches (VMAPs)
- MindMe: A Kit to Support Positive Mental Health

3 NUTRITION
- Digi-Board: Height Measurement Device
- Complementary Feeding Bowl and Spoon
- Project Play: Repurposing Packaging into Toys

2 EMERGENCY
- High Performance Tents
- Health Emergency Facility

3 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
- Appropriate Wheelchairs
- Hearing Aids
- App Catalogue

3 WASH
- Disability-friendly Latrine Slab Add-on
- Rapid Water Quality Testing
The NASG demonstrates that sometimes we don’t always need to innovate – we can take a proven life-saving innovation and focus on ensuring it is available and accessible for those who need it most. The NASG is a low-cost first-aid compression suit that limits persistent postpartum hemorrhaging in new mothers, originally designed with NASA technology. UNICEF didn’t invent the NASG nor was it part of the product’s development. However, UNICEF noticed that this technology wasn’t reaching coverage at scale, so is using its know-how capacity in scaling proven technologies to ensure a quality product is available and accessible in locations where it would be most effective.
Our classroom is no longer hot under the sun. I’m now very happy,” says Rasid, 12, who was displaced from his home by typhoons in the Philippines. The new tents keep classrooms cool so children can focus on their education.

The Complementary Feeding Bowl demonstrates the importance of frugal innovations. It’s just a simple bowl - or is it? UNICEF is working with manufacturers to develop a solution for combating malnutrition in young children. With poor quality diets driving malnutrition and almost half of all children not eating a balanced diet, a practical solution is needed to ensure families continue good nutrition practices at home. The project focuses on two products: a complementary feeding bowl with nutritional diversity and handwashing messages to address food quality, and indications for age group to address food quantity; and a slotted spoon to ensure that the first semi-solid food after exclusive breastfeeding is the right consistency (i.e. energy-dense, not watered down).
UNICEF’s Role in Product Innovation

UNICEF’s expertise is in understanding the needs of children at a global level and driving scale through programming. The organization does not develop new products. Which is why, during the R&D process, UNICEF leans on its partnerships with businesses and academia to leverage the comparative strengths of different organizations. As such, UNICEF’s product innovation strategy is based on how to best leverage the unique power of UNICEF.

KEY FIGURES
(since 2013)

- **26** TPPs launched (16 in partnership with NEST360° on newborn care)
- **43** Field trials conducted (individual trials per country)
- **63** New products included or updated in the UNICEF Supply Catalogue
- **29** PIPs currently active
- **04** PIPs successfully handed over to operations, now in full scale
- **14** PIPs terminated based on solid analyses that otherwise would have increased costs to UNICEF & partners to continue.

WHY UNICEF?

With over 70 years of delivering life-saving products to millions of children worldwide, UNICEF is uniquely positioned to be a leader in innovating for children.

In 2020, UNICEF procured nearly US$4.5 billion in supplies and services, empowering the organization to drive businesses to invest in the development of quality products. UNICEF also brings strength in programming as the leading humanitarian and development agency working globally for the rights of children where the organization can drive scale through its respected relationships with local governments.

This global status - both in procurement and programming - gives UNICEF the ability to negotiate with industry to develop the best-of-the-best products for children at an affordable price for programming.